

Report of the Associate Ministerial director, Prayer Ministries Coordinator and the Women's Ministries Director of the ECC

Verna M.R. Francis

To the East Caribbean Conference,

7th Quadrennial Session

August, 2025

Mr. Chairman,

Inter America Division representatives,

Caribbean Union Officers,

Field Presidents, Delegates, Guests, Members.

It is my pleasure to present this report to you covering the activities and achievements of the Ministries I was asked to coordinate.

This report covers the ministries that I now hold, namely Associate Ministerial Secretary, which is the new name for the one responsible for the Pastoral Spouses, Prayer Ministries, and Women's Ministries. I will be reviewing the period from 2021-2024, which overlaps two different administrations.

The Mantra of the first being: "Embracing Transformation, Growth and Partnership", and the latter – RESET Renew, Engage, Support, Energize, and Transform – an acronym expressing what leaders are expected to do for the membership:.

It has been my absolute pleasure to have coordinated and led these Ministries for over three years. I have personally grown, while encouraging others through various means to grow in their devotional life and Faith. Like Jesus, I have seen the travail of my soul, and I am satisfied.

Since the church is pastor-led, let me begin with the influence I had the privilege of sharing with their spouses.

Mrs. White makes many powerful statements regarding the minister's spouse and children. I think it is fitting for me to quote two of them to help us understand this ministry.

The real character of the minister is revealed at home. It is not so much the religion of the pulpit as the religion of the family that reveals our real character. The minister's wife, his children, and those who are employed as helpers in his family are best qualified to be judges of his piety. A good man will be a blessing to his household. Wife, children, and helpers will all be the better for his religion. --AH 354. {PaM 85.1}

A minister's success or failure depends very much on the spouse. The wife of a minister of the gospel can be either a most successful helper and a great blessing to her husband or a hindrance to him in his work. It depends very much on the wife whether a minister will rise from day to day in his sphere of usefulness, or whether he will sink to the ordinary level. --AH 355. {PaM 86.1}

So to buttress their spiritual life we conducted many prayer breakfasts, and prayer suppers, giving us the opportunity to share and grow, not only from the Word of God, and the Spirit of Prophecy, but also from life experiences.

We also had a series of certification programmes, which are designed to give the pastors' spouses the opportunity to expand their skill sets in terms of the challenges of ministry. We had ladies both from the Caribbean Union in the person of Sister Linda Tobias and two experienced pastors' wives from the Inter-American Division (IAD), in the persons of Sis. Gloria Trotman and Sis. Margaret Daniel, contributing to these educational experiences. We express our gratitude to these ladies for their sterling contribution. After the Ministerial Retreat in Punta Cana in 2024, our ladies on both islands agreed to run a certification programme again every Tuesday and Thursday night for several weeks. They have truly been enriched by this experience, as they did the presentations, thereby deepening their knowledge.

IAD The ministerial retreat in Punta Cana provided our Ladies with a dynamic fellowship opportunity which resulted in a new bond of friendship and understanding and a greater appreciation for their roles in team ministry. This was a real RESET. We applaud the organisers of the programme and the administration of our conference for providing the resource so that our families could attend.

Another idea that took root during the period was the setting up of a Pastors' Kids Club. This is a very important Club, which has as its objectives the saving of our pastors' children who are living in an age where many young people are leaving the church because of the challenges they face in homes, and communities.

As you know, ordination is a high point in a pastor's life work, and their spouses contribute to this achievement. We were happy to be supportive of the ladies who stood by their men in this act in 2022: Pastor and Sis Denny, Pastor and Sister Joseph, Pastor and Sister Coliare, and Pastor Deborah Spooner. We believe that our ministerial spouses are in a better place at the end of this term than they were at the beginning. To God be the praise. May God continue to bless them in their ministry.

PRAYER MINISTRY

“ . . . the hour of prayer is the most precious, the most sacred, and the happiest hour of the day. These seasons of devotion exert a refining, elevating influence upon all who participate in them. They bring a peace and rest, grateful to the spirit.” {CG 521.1}

I can testify to the truthfulness of this quote from the servant of the Lord. Since the COVID-19 epidemic and the closing of our churches, we have initiated a vibrant prayer ministry in our Conference.

The flagship programme was first launched on Sabbath afternoons and has now evolved to a daily morning programme from 5.00 until 6.00 a.m. called Morning Manner. These sessions of singing, reading of scripture, testifying and praying, have been a blessing to all who attend. It is appropriate to say that at each prayer programme, there are “listed” prayer points and God has been proving himself a prayer answering God. This initiative has now spread to many more churches across both islands. A biolink was created, which makes it easier for anyone, whether within or without the conference to join these sessions.

In place of a crafted devotional thought by a pastor or a lay preacher, the group in Barbados have been reading daily from one of six Spirit of Prophecy books, namely: Christ Object Lessons, Ministry of Healing, The Great Controversy, Patriarchs and Prophets, Prophets and Kings, and the Adventist Home. These books not only expose our members to new and powerful insights, and counsels for these last days, but they are RESETing their lives making them greater reflectors of Christ.

We played a part on Kairi FM Radio, in Dominica with pastor Matthews many Sunday mornings, giving information on the power of prayer, and supported by testimonies shared by prayer ministers.

There were several prayer vigils by various churches; Prayer meetings by the ministerial associations, both in Dominica as well as in Barbados. Prayer also continues to be a major part of all our schools' curriculum.

Our Union (CARU) and our Division (IAD) have monthly prayer programmes (Back to the Altar) at which a significant number of ECC members are in attendance, and play their part when called upon. We have also conducted sessions for the University of Southern

Caribbean. These sessions allow us to share, and pray with our brothers and sisters across the entire territory, while creating a bond of unity and togetherness.

We express our gratitude to our Prayer ministers and the coordinators of our local churches, our sister fields and the higher organizations for their stick-to-it-ive-ness in maintaining these programmes.

As a result of these transformative programmes, most of our churches now have dedicated prayer ministers. Some of them run their prayer programmes at their lunch hour, some at nights on Zoom, and invite their non-Adventist friends to join them. Our prayer ministers also participate in the evangelistic efforts, joining together to form the prayer bands and offering special prayers at each service.

The ministry continues to promote the annual Weeks of Prayer for pastors, the adult Week of Prayer and the AY Week of Prayer. We also support our respective governments when we sponsored special prayer programs for our nations as they confronted the rising crimes in the country. In addition, we conducted many prayer breakfasts, Prayer walks, and other prayer initiatives.

There are currently many creative ways of praying, people are sending out not only written prayers but voice prayers via voice messages. People are praying by phone calls, what a Reset! We continue to encourage a Reset in the weekly Wednesday night services.

There are many more events and activities that I could mention here, but time would not permit, however, I would like to mention an event which was conducted twice, in 2023 and in 2024. We had two half-night prayer vigils, which focused on the Retention and Restoration of our members. We had instruction as to how we could make our churches and their services more attractive; how we could be more inviting rather than repelling; and what steps we could take in wooing the missing ones back to the fold. Each attendee was asked to bring a list of missing members who would be the object of their prayers. At the end of each hour, we went into Breakout rooms to pray for the missing.

In the first programme, Pastor Brian Carter was the main presenter; in the second one, Pastor Francis, Pastor Morancie - the ministerial Secretary, Pastor Terance Haynes - the Executive Secretary of our conference, and our President, Pastor Anthony Hall, were the presenters. These gentlemen did an outstanding job, attested by all those who attended. While we did not create a mechanism to measure the success, we are sure about two things: the attendance could have been better; and we did not give them a follow-up activity in a continuing effort to bring back those whom they were praying for.

In light of the turmoil in the world and our countries today, the statement of Jesus (by Jesus) comes to mind, "this kind cometh not out but by prayer and fasting". So there is a call to us, his people living in the last days, to pray and fast. "If my people would pray..." Let us therefore be known as a praying church; and let each of our worship centres be known as Houses of Prayer.

WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

In the book Evangelism, page 471.5 we are reminded that: "Women can be the instruments of righteousness, rendering holy service. It was Mary that first preached a risen Jesus. . . . If there were twenty women where now there is one, who would make this holy mission their cherished work, we should see many more converted to the truth. The refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth.--Review and Herald, Jan 2, 1879.

What powerful counsel by the servant of the Lord! Many have heeded this counsel; but there are still too many who need to get involved in the life of the church. Our women, especially the young women, should be given an opportunity to become involved in the highest service of the church, or at Sessions. We do not believe that women should have to fight for their rightful place.

Notwithstanding this situation the Adventist Women continue to grow and lend their participation in the churches and communities. They are active in evangelistic campaigns and Prayer Ministry activities. They join the ECC in their monthly or bi-monthly Prayer Breakfasts at different sites around the island, and the many churches who conduct their own. Not only are the numbers increasing, but the quality of programmes are proving a tremendous blessing.

They are also involved in the promotion of a healthy lifestyle both in the church and in the community. They are ordained elders, clerks, treasurers, and deaconesses, and occupy other offices, creating an improved church life. Their motto appears to be: "Forward ever, backward, never!" And to this we say, AMEN!

The WMin. three special days are: International Women's Day of Prayer, Women's Emphasis Day; and the Enditnow initiative were carried out in most of the churches. Thanks be to God for the improvement shown in these areas.

The IAD Publishing Association has been very kind in sharing with us the author of the 2024 Women's devotional – Mrs. Monica Diaz. She came to Barbados and delivered a powerful and soul-stirring message at one of our monthly Prayer Breakfasts. It was a heavenly atmosphere; and a message ever to be remembered.

Also for our Enditnow activity in August, 2024, the IADPA once again extended an invitation to author, and speaker, Mrs. Yvonne Rodney of Canada to be with us for a weekend of activities. On the Sabbath, Oldbury was packed to capacity as she ministered to the needs of the women and young GEMS on the subject of Abuse and Mental Health, sharing her personal experiences. Many of our women shared their personal experiences also, and promises were made for greater support of each other.

The conference and some churches are conducting Flea Markets so that needy women and others might use their talents to provide themselves with financial assistance, and to boost their ministry's funds.

During the quadrennium there were several campaigns conducted mainly by women. We pray God that this movement will continue to gain momentum even as we approach the coming of our Saviour who has left us the Great Commission.

The ECC women are on the move! During the year 2024 - The Year of Evangelism, they took up the challenge and conducted the Hope for Better Things Campaign, June 16 to 29. In preparation for this campaign, a weekend retreat was held June 7-9 at the Plum Tree Resort, Rockley, Christ Church, where more than 60 persons attended, and were prepared for ministry by four of the five women visiting from overseas. The campaign was conducted with a Health Emphasis, and five very precious souls accepted the SDA message and were baptized.

Observing that one of those who was baptized could not read the word of God for herself, we decided to start a literacy class, extending the invitation to the rest of the churches in the ECC. The online classes have started and both teachers and students are enjoying a fulfilling experience.

At the end of the campaign, on July 16, the women took their evangelistic skills to the seas. We went on a Missionary Cruise with motivational speaker, Mrs. Beverly Chan of the Davis Memorial Hospital. Each time we docked, we got the opportunity to evangelize — sharing small books, magazines, and praying with people on the islands. The group testified that they were energized for greater service in their home churches.

We touched the lives of individuals around the world that we otherwise would not have had the privilege of reaching. Only in eternity would we know the results of our witness.

I'm grateful to God for the privilege given me to have served his church in these, and many other capacities. I pray that as I leave active service, these ministries will continue to grow and expand the kingdom of God.

I am grateful to the women and men whose path I've crossed in these ministries, brethren whose prayers, encouragement, and cooperation propelled the success we've had.

Thanks to the various secretaries of the departments over the years, for their faithful service. For the mentorship of the directors of these ministries at the higher organization, I'm deeply grateful. To Mrs. Debra Henry, the Women's Ministries Director; Pastor Ashton O'Niel, the Prayer Ministries Director; Pastor Samuel Telemaque at the IAD; and all our Conference pastors and departmental directors, I say a hearty Thank you for your collegiality, support, and encouragement.

Special thanks to my administrators: Pastor Hall, our President, Pastor Haynes, the Executive Secretary, and Sis. Dottin, our Treasurer, for their backing, guidance, and for providing resources that made it possible to accomplish the things we did.

I thank God for the husband he gave to me, whose love has been, and continues to be a source of strength in my life. Best of all, I thank God for life, for wisdom, for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and his forgiveness of my shortcomings. I pray that I, and those whose lives I've touched over the years, will be found faithful at the end of our life's journey. For those persons whom I might have offended over these years, in one way or another, I sincerely ask your pardon, and pray that you will find it in your hearts to forgive me. For those who have done me wrong, be assured that you are forgiven.

It is with these words that I commend this report to this august assembly. Thank you.